

The University of Chicago

A CRITIQUE OF RECENT
CONCEPTIONS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN CANDI-
DACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

1934

By
GILBERT KELLY ROBINSON

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INTRODUCTION

The idea of spiritual life has had a long history, and it is not strange that in the course of time it has served a somewhat varied function so that the term spiritual life today is used in widely different connotations. The term has not played as large a part in Christian creeds and dogmas as have the ideas of God, Christ, sin, and salvation, nor has there been as much controversy concerning it as with these other concepts. Few writers have clearly defined spiritual life, although many use the term in their works. The use must often be discerned from the connection, and particularly by that from which the spiritual is contrasted, or distinguished, as, e.g., the material, bodily, mechanistic, frivolous, worldly, whimsical, indifferent, or selfish. A part of the purpose of discussions of spiritual life is to point out the kinds of life which spirituality seeks to transcend or against which it is a protest.

A cursory examination of uses to which the term is put will reveal differences and seeming contradictions. Such questions as these arise: Is it the unruffled calm of one who has found peace with his world, or is it the "divine discontent" of an aspiring soul? If it is a quality that may manifest itself in either of these, then how is it to be conceived so as to include these opposites? If spirituality is essentially a matter of individual development, then how is this related to interest in social outcomes? Is spiritual life to be identified with all consciously directed life, regardless of the conscious ideals of that life, or is it self-determining life only when the individual directs his endeavors toward what he conceives to be high ends? Is spir-

itual living the same as religious living in general, or is it religious life in its loftier reaches? Is the idea of spiritual life bound up with a dualistic view of the world? Has it a supernaturalistic connotation, with no rightful place in a naturalistic view of life? The need for a critical review of uses of the term to the end of discerning more clearly what it may stand for is evident as soon as such questions are raised.

It is the purpose of this study to arrive at a valid and vital use of the term spiritual life. An examination is made of the ideas upon this subject in the writings of fourteen leading religious and philosophical writers of the last half century, with a view to arriving, first, at what use of the term is warranted. In the course of the examination of these authors, endeavor is made to resolve contradictions in each. The common elements in all the authors' concepts furnish a useful initial provisional definition. A more adequate conception is sought by a critical analysis of points upon which the authors divide, and the utilization of suggestions and implications of their usage.

In seeking for a central core of what the idea of spiritual life connotes, it appeared likely that the maximum success would attend such an endeavor if the writers selected for examination were all of the same general philosophical school. The material of this dissertation will, I think, bear out this view. I foresaw also, however, a limitation in this kind of procedure, viz., the resulting conception might not be acceptable to authors of another viewpoint, who none the less feel that the term has a vital meaning. The inclusion of both spiritualists and naturalists, of pluralists, dualists, and monists, has aided, no doubt, in overcoming this limitation.

The men selected are recognized leaders, either in theology

or in philosophy or in both fields. They represent three countries, Germany, England, and America, and this serves to bring out more uses of the term than if all were selected from one country, and perhaps brings us closer to the generic sense of the term. It is well to note also that the selection represents a variety of religious backgrounds: Jewish, Roman Catholic, English (Church of England), Lutheran, and Calvinist. Some of the writers were chosen for study because they have written a considerable amount upon the spiritual life. An exhaustive treatment of each man would be beyond the scope and purpose of this dissertation, but the aim has been to present the viewpoints of the men sufficiently to make discernible the meaning of their ideas and uses of the term. The full import of the clues thus derived must be ascertained by a scrutiny into the questions of epistemology, metaphysics, and axiology, which are involved.

The position of the dualistic theologians is understandable. They have not learned to rely upon the somewhat unfamiliar supports of critical examination. Herrmann's attack upon psychology is not strange when we realize that writings in that field were looking at conscience and religious experience in their actual content, and pointing out their social conditioning. When the theologian claims as his exclusive domain all the ideals and aspirations of man, and all his beliefs about man's significance and status in the cosmos, he is trying to exclude others from what seems to them to be their rightful area of study. His domain is repeatedly invaded, and the result is distress of spirit, for he is not sure of himself and his supports. He may have a secret if not an avowed feeling that his system of thought may not be invulnerable, and that if attacked too thoroughly it might crumble.

This state of things is in many respects a repetition of what has gone on time after time in the history of the relations of science and religion. The conflict has been largely one of retreat on the part of religion. The reason is that the exponents of religion have tried to continue to hold as much of traditional theology as possible. They have sought to retain all that is not in conflict with the conclusions of science which are most assured. Hence, we have the pathetic spectacle of tense uneasiness in the examination of new scientific conclusions. The road that was designed to foster security leads repeatedly to a feeling of insecurity.

For those who are brought up in modern scientific culture the position that science does not penetrate to reality seems an oddity, and this will probably be increasingly the case as more and more avenues of life are brought under the province of scientific investigation. The faith of scientific method, based on an

abundance of evidence, is that the world is intrinsically responsive to the efforts of intelligence. It should not be denied that scientific method is a menace of the morale of many people. This will continue to be true as long as people feel bound to hold to positions that are untenable from a rational and empirical viewpoint.

Adherence to scientific method is not, however, inconsistent with a feeling of security, and when sufficiently grasped may foster that feeling. Peace of mind may come, and with it a zest for life, when it is realized that, after all, spiritual reality can be conceived in such a way that the scientific approach becomes an ally, a great emancipator. Then it becomes clear that the distressing and tragic withdrawal from one position after another was a mistake in that it was only a temporary remedy and did not get at the root of the trouble. It becomes evident how little of real positive significance has been lost and how much of value has been gained by learning to state freely the meaning of spiritual life in terms of events and forces that are observable in the moving life within and about us.

So long as the upholding of spiritual reality is dependent upon the limiting of science, the uneasiness and the devastating questions that are raised, carry the human mind into tormenting doubts and waverings. When life is seen to be all of a piece, the rational and the empirical are no longer the opponents, but they are the worthy tools of the aspiring soul of man in its quest for light and life and spiritual achievement. In contrast to the agnosticism and skepticism which science has threatened to produce, the spiritual man faces the world with a buoyant and enlightened faith.

A Naturalistic View of Ideals

Spiritual life in its fullest sense includes worthy ideals. The question of what is worthy will be reserved for the next chapter. It is the purpose of this section to inquire into the meaning of ideals and their function in a naturalistic approach to reality.

The story of mankind is a tale of cities with their skyscrapers that defy the blasts of many tempests, of bridges that span the mighty rivers, of railway trains that thunder their way across vast continents, of ocean liners that move with speed and safety upon the seven seas — monuments of his efforts in a world of material objects which ever and anon has been transformed through the realm of ideas. Of all the ideas that men have harbored, among the most productive have been those utopian dreams for which they have been willing to spend themselves. Lewis Mumford has much to say¹ upon the meaning and function of ideal futures constructed in imagination. He gives the following quotation from Anatole France: "Without the Utopians of other times men would still live in caves, miserable and naked. It was Utopians who traced the lines of the first city." "Out of generous dreams come beneficial realities. Utopia is the principle of all progress, and the essay into a better future."

"Ideals arise out of the sense of inadequacy, the consciousness of dissatisfaction and incompleteness in life." They are "born of discontent. We desire that which is more satisfying than the present attainment."² The idea which we frame of the most satisfying is an extension in imagination of what has already in some measure been experienced. It is a projection to fuller dimen-

¹Lewis Mumford, The Story of Utopias (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922).

²Edwin Ewart Aubrey, Religion and the Next Generation (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), pp. 30, 31.

sions of a condition which in meager degree had hitherto been attained or observed.

The goals which men set up in imagination may be divided into three kinds: those which are mere pipe dreams; those that are attainable; and those which, if not completely attainable, are approachable. We should remember also, that there are futures which are as yet unknown to us. The confidence that there are worthy goals of present existence which are not included in our specific ideals, is a faith amply warranted by the experience of mankind and is conducive to expansive living. This faith is not to be classified coordinately with the three types of ideals mentioned because it is not an ideal in the strict sense, but an attitude, that may accompany devotion to ideals of various kinds. It means a recognition that our present ideals may be mistaken, and a commitment to whatever proves to be best.

To a large degree the differences in viewpoint with reference to ideals represents a divergence in temper of mind. There are those who realize the ease by which dreams may be conceived and the impracticability of trying to embody them. Their attitude is characterized as realistic, and the injunction to learn to want what one can have is not uncommon among them. Sometimes this type of mind is marked by cynicism or by a "subtle, social hopelessness that neutralizes social effort."

There are other souls who will not be so bound by a dwelling upon the formidable aspects of reality. They face life with confidence, and are not afraid of a venturing hope. "The great function of utopias has been that of providing the imagination, the hope, the dynamic to struggle in the midst of seeming defeat. In order to struggle men must not despair, but must catch glimpses of the new

day."¹ That is what men have done; they have lived not alone in their present achievements, but also in their ambitions and dreams.

Some ideals are flights from reality. They are divorced from actualities and possibilities, however much they may have been suggested by features in the real world. Such pipe dreams are not without their benefits if they do not usurp a function which is not their right. A world of fantasy may be needed from time to time to enable us to recover our sanity when the world seems to overwhelm us. It sometimes helps us to retreat for a while and indulge in a world of fiction. Once we have weathered the storm, however, it is dangerous to remain in this utopia of escape, "for it is an enchanted island, and to remain there is to lose one's capacity for dealing with things as they are."²

We must discern the difference between visions which cling to existence and seek their inculcation there, and those which are fashioned in a world of make-believe. Existence is inescapable. We must have ideals that are more than the poetical imagery of a wishful fancy. If our dreams are to find fulfillment, they must reckon with the world in which they seek realization. Spirituality has too often been conceived as the antithesis of facing reality, as a cultivation of an inner peace that mocks the troublous times in which it lives. It is apt to become more of a compensatory dream than an impetus to transform the world. Spiritual life is regarded as belonging to an attitude opposite to that of the social message. Its character is such that the consciences of its devotees are quieted upon the evils of the world about them.

When bolstered up by dualistic philosophy spiritual life has been even more in danger of being detached from the living

¹Arthur E. Holt and Samuel C. Kincheloe, Readings on the City of God, a mimeographed document.

²Lewis Mumford, The Story of Utopias, pp. 19-20.

struggles of men. It has supported the Protestant emphasis upon faith and the "inner life" to the neglect of the effort to cope with existence. The result is that Eucken feels he must labor hard to convince people that his spiritual realm is not an unjustifiable intrusion into the work-a-day world. Eucken's difficulty is that he places his spiritual world apart from nature, apart from forces and events with which we must deal. He endangers himself to the criticism of Dewey, that an ideal realm which has "no roots in existence has no efficacy nor relevancy."

The transcendent ideal world is often far too transcendent. The spiritual ideals which Dean Inge believes to be paramount are never reached except very meagerly under the conditions of earthly existence. There is, in fact, a fundamental difference between the ideal in reality and the ideal as it can be realized in existence. For Rudolf Otto the ideal world is forever beyond our grasp, an alluring abyss which we shall never fathom. Randall's ideal is possible to conceive, but impossible to actualize. Any ideal that goes beyond possibility is liable to serious questioning, particularly if it is recognized clearly to be beyond the realm of possibility. Such an ideal, as Dewey says,¹ brings discouragement rather than inspiration, for it reminds us that no matter what we achieve we have fallen short of the ideal.

Perry has said² that a life that is to be happy must have "something to live for," some end as yet unattained, and it is equally important that this end should seem attainable. I should add, approachable. Ideals should be working ends, related to possible or probable eventuations that may be foreseen in present existence. The contemplation of the far-reaching must be in terms of the forces of the present.

¹Human Nature and Conduct, p. 288.

²General Theory of Value, pp. 553-557.

Ideals which are completely within reach help to give an air of finality and encouragement to our endeavors. There is the satisfaction, as Santayana has said, "of having done this." The importance of holding such ideals is not to be minimized. Valid ideals, however, are of two sorts: those we aim to reach and those we seek to approximate. There is no reason why pragmatism should shrink from the latter. In one case the expectation is to attain, and in many instances efforts are regarded as futile unless the goal is reached. In the other case, the ideal may not be completely accessible, but its progressive approximation is regarded as very much worth achieving. Our yearnings are directed towards a goal which we may never gain, but which can help us to keep our sense of direction definitely conceptualized. A guiding star does not lose its value as a guide because it is never reached.

Physics makes use of such ideal constructs as a frictionless surface or engine, a perfect pendulum, a perfectly elastic ball, and absolute zero in temperature. Geometry deals with perfect circles, perfect squares, etc. That these are probably never completely found or constructed in existence is not of great significance from the viewpoint of control. If the imperfections can be eliminated to the extent that they are no longer troublesome, we gain a great deal of positive satisfaction. Our achievement is then a serial extension of constructions in existence, e.g., pendulums, in the direction of the ideal construct. Many of the great scientific laws are formulations of what does not exist at all. These laws enable us to perceive an interrelatedness which otherwise we would not see, convey information about what does not exist, and give direction for our efforts. They must, however, retain a fundamental empirical reference if they are to be helpful.

The two kinds of ideals which are presented here are not

unrelated. The attainable goal may serve as a next step toward a distant goal. The distant goal may be to bring complete freedom to all men in a harmonious society, whereas the next step may be some piece of anti-slavery legislation, or an alleviation of some particular case or situation. The approachable ideal may be the elimination of all disease, whereas actual efforts are designed more specifically toward the conquest of some particular malady; care is taken that the cure shall not entail greater evils than the disease. Hence there is a wider perspective than the concrete ailment. There are many situations in which we are not greatly concerned if we do not reach the ideal, so long as we can approximate it. Our source of comfort is to gain sufficient control so that obstructions are not serious.

The closer goals are imperative because they are more definite. Their meaning is clearer in terms of the events and potencies of the present. Vision is stunted, however, if large scale enterprises are left out of view. There are some who boast that all their goals have been achieved, all their ideals have been reached, but they are the souls who have never experienced the thrill and grandeur of a great purpose. The vision such as that of a warless world, or a way out of economic depressions, has perhaps never been on their horizon.

A vision of a possible world has arisen among many people in our time, from our knowledge of the potentialities of machinery for the satisfaction of human cravings. An economic order is pictured in which the financial worries and struggles which we know shall be at an end. The burden of insecurity which has been man's dread from time immemorial shall be done away. It is one of the visions that may take generations to actualize.

Numerous great devotions of history are as yet unattained.

Noble souls in all ages have found their greatest purposes unfilled when the evening of life came. They have realized only a part of that to which they have aspired. Their vision has been too lofty and too sweeping to find fulfillment within their own lifetime. Many of them were counted as failures because they lived for the unrealized. Some of their ideals have since been embodied in existence in whole or in part, and ensuing generations have arisen to sing their praises. Others are among the nameless dead whose ideas have found completion. Others have lived for impracticable ideals, but their idealism, with all its blunders, has helped to keep alive the aspiring soul of man. Age after age the spiritual man will erect in his imagination a city of God that ever beckons to nobler living.

The most fruitful idealism will hold its plans of action as subject to correction, as tentative.¹ No present ideal should be held to be ultimate, for not yet do we understand all things. We have not fathomed all the deep recesses of life. We must cherish our ideals as stepping-stones in the quest for whatever the evidence manifests to be truly best. We have ample reason to believe that there are values beyond those that we envisage, even though we know them only in part. The spiritual man has a commitment, a pledge bigger than any single program. Particular projects may crumble, but he is not undone for his hopes are not fettered by a narrow devotion to his own especial interests or causes. His mind is open to the widening of horizons through insights into the unknown and unexplored possibilities of existence. He is impelled to consecrate his energies to the unknown best.

¹Henry Nelson Wieman, The Issues of Life (New York: The Abingdon Press, 1930).

The Marks of Greater Good

The aim of the ethical life is to find the system of interacting forces that will best serve human need, and to this end we must find all the connectedness possible. It is at times more important to discover dependable relations than to attain some specific immediate end. The greatest good cannot be attained by merely clarifying and satisfying our present desires. Change in human desires and interests through a directing vision is often needed to avoid confusion and disappointment. The delights of an hour may be detrimental to the gaining of a far-reaching good. Regarding our social relationships, interest in the interests of others is insufficient without a consideration of the eventual aspect of life. A large perspective both in time and space, is required for the most satisfying life, individually and collectively.

It is when we enlarge our horizon beyond the immediate, and are willing to sacrifice a greater satisfaction in the present for a greater future good, that spiritual living emerges. In contrast to the life of the libertine, spiritual life stands for the introduction of broad, inclusive purposes.

The control of forces in the environment is also a fundamental requisite to the quest of the good life. The fulfillment of aims necessitates that we concern ourselves with external conditions. Hence, moral expositions that confine morality to the harmonizing of desires are inadequate. Greater value, as Dewey says, might involve a reorganization of our basic economic and political structure, rather than a mere harmonizing of goals in the present. Much discourse on the subjectivity of spiritual life excludes concern for the environing conditions of social life,

and constitutes a retreat and escape from existence.

For Santayana, spiritual life is life with repose, in contrast to the disposition to be tense and restless about existence. Like Lotze and Cohen, he feels that the great moments of life are not those of hustle, bustle and strain, but the calm of peace, with rich imaginings, while the spirit of man stands aside from the moving world. Such experiences are doubtless of great value in themselves and as they contribute to wholesomeness and sanity. Santayana himself recognizes, however, that it is folly to ignore the material universe. His idea is that man should become master of the pressure of circumstance, that he may be liberated from the compulsion to honor the facts, and free to engage himself in a world of make-believe.

For Dewey, one of the glories of man lies in his manipulation of the energies of the world of flux. Dewey's interest is in efficiency in the solution of problems. It is an impressive fact that in the present state of human history, a major part of most lives must be spent in adjustment to existence. To ignore this fact in preference for pretty dreams is to invite one's self into a destructible paradise. The urgency of the economic problem is borne in upon us also by the recognition of the tremendous power that is at our disposal for the production of goods. For perhaps the first time in history, we have the resources to abolish poverty, and the significance of this prospect should not be underrated. Along with the alleviation of evils and the solution of problems, however, human lives need a taste also of art, play, social interest, and knowledge, without the compulsion to find a practical use for them. This is the truth contained in Santayana's ideal.

The attainment of the greatest good calls for attention to the relations of man with his fellowmen. George Albert Coe

observed over thirty years ago that spiritual life was commonly identified with certain states of feeling, and carried little or no social reference. He hoped that the term might come to be associated with social outcomes, and believed he had evidence that it had tended in that direction. The lack of connection of spirituality with social ends is not due to any necessary connotation of spiritual life, but has been largely due to the fact that the human spirit has been envisaged apart from the social environment out of which it arose and to which it must look for expression and expansion. A sufficient formulation of the aim of spiritual living must take account of social organization, and be framed with reference to it.

There are some who advocate that we should continue to be restless and dissatisfied so long as poverty and other social evils exist. The truth in this contention is that we ought not to be forgetful of the evil of the world while we have power to lessen it. This principle, however, should not preclude experiences such as in friendship and the enjoyment of art, in which at times there is a completeness of enjoyment and peace. These experiences may be regarded as intimations of the life that may become the lot of all, and they may help us to define and foresee the conditions and possibilities of a truly happy society. As Santayana has said, a soul that is responsive to beauties that are in his midst, is in better position thereby to make his contribution to the happiness of those about him. He is better prepared for ideal companionships.

If intercommunication of persons is to promote the greatest possible good, there are certain requirements that must be met. In the adjustments of life, there are difficulties which call for assistance, cooperation and criticism; success is frequently born

of criticism. Along with the designation of flaws, however, human relations need to have also mutual understanding and appreciation and encouragement. Equally important, too, is the need for common devotions, and an adequate vision of the goal of human striving.

The greatest possible value consists in a community of personalities in which each contributes to and each partakes in a happy social order. If such a condition is not entirely possible, it is an ideal to which we may make continual approach. Each shall find satisfaction in the abundant good of all, in the promotion of the greater common weal. General concord will prevail among the nations and races of men, based upon mutual appreciation and understanding. Such are the marks of a society of the spirit, whose individual lives become a bridge between the impulses and urgings of human desire, and the supreme good that is possible to man.

CHAPTER XI

THE MEANING OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

The term spiritual life has had a great variety of meanings to different people; and even the same individual has often used the term in more than one sense. By some it is used to connote social life as distinguished from physical or material life; for others it has meant a life of solitude, communion with one's own soul or with the Divine Spirit. Not a few have used it to designate the aesthetic life, or an enthusiastic emotional experience, whereas for others it refers to a life that is calm, and undisturbed by the passing pageants of the hour. Implicit in most references to spiritual life or spirituality is the idea that this kind of life is commendatory. Living that is spiritual, it is often said in effect, is above the mores of the average. When life and religion drop to the level of propriety and custom, they are unspiritual. Spirituality is the higher life of man, or the life of God in the human soul.

There are many words in our language which are used in distinct senses in different connections, and the laws of correct word usage do not forbid this practice. There is no serious objection to this so long as terms continue to carry definite significance. From time to time, however, a clarification of terms is needed, especially where the meaning has become hazy, confused or uncertain. Some words in such a situation gradually fade out of use, largely because the ways of life and thought have shifted, and these words are no longer so relevant as they once were. Others

persist because, although the changing philosophies and sciences and theologies make it hard for many persons to know how they should be interpreted in the newer settings, they nevertheless can and do refer to vital experiences. Spiritual life is in this latter classification.

The Meaning of the Common Elements in the Usage of the Term

Through the utilization of the expositions of spiritual life by the various authors considered in this study, and their implied uses of the term, a vital and consistent concept of spiritual life is derivable which is common. This concept furnishes a starting point for a fuller, more adequate idea of its meaning. A brief statement of this starting point follows. Spiritual life is regulated, to a degree, by plan, by some measure of intelligence. Spiritual activity is activity which is consciously governed by the individual. It is reflective and purposive. There is a grasp of, and a response to, something beyond what is immediately presented. The spiritual man lives, not for a small segment of existence alone, but he apprehends wide reaches of time and space. Through memory and expectation and the correlation of experiences, he attains a broad perspective.

In the idea of purpose there is implicit the notion that one's life is directed toward some goal or goals. In the more specific and more adequate meaning of spiritual life, these goals are conceived to be worthy of aspiration and endeavor. Spiritual living, says Eucken, seeks something higher than the common run of human culture. There is the conscious ordering and directing of one's life in accordance with lofty ideals. Where spiritual life is distinguished from spirituality, it is used synonymously

with personality or conscious life or intelligence, and has no necessary reference to worthiness of life. There are times with all the authors, however, when the notion of aspiration or worthy ideals is implied, if not actually stated, in the idea of the spiritual life. It is composed of conscious desires for that which is worthy and does not include those unconscious forces which make for good.

One of the most pertinent questions with regard to the idea of spiritual life is that of what it can mean to one who no longer holds to traditional theologies and philosophies of which the notion of spirit and spiritual life have been a part. In particular, what may the term mean to one who does not hold to a material-spiritual dualism, but conceives of nature as including all that exists and acts? Is the idea of spiritual life bound up with a dualistic conception of the world? Has it a supernaturalistic connotation with no rightful place in a naturalistic view of life? There is cogency in these questions, because the practice of merely defending the spiritual without any clear indication of what is meant, is of little value. It should be apparent, in some degree at least, what good is embodied in the concept. It is well, therefore, to summarize the meaning of the initial definition of spiritual life from a naturalistic point of view.

Spirit is a function of animal life. When the living form has become emancipated from the control of the present alone, it has begun to emerge as spirit. Spirit is one of the ways in which nature is organized; it is part of the interactions of nature. Man is not reduced to mechanism by this process, if by mechanism is meant that kind of interaction which is characteristic of non-living matter, for there is an empirically ascertainable difference between the interactions of man and those of the inanimate. The

interactions of man with his environment are governed by a wider perspective than that which impinges upon him immediately. He projects ends and moves toward their realization.

This ability of man is made possible through the distance senses and the mechanism of symbols. The human spirit reacts not only to strong forces about him, but he responds very noticeably to words, actions, and ideas. Through ideation, essences are found which bind together different situations in space and time. There is an organization of perspectives. The spirit looks before and after. The past lives on in memory and habit, and the future embodies itself in imagination. The organism is a spirit on those occasions in which it has perspective and vision.

Despite divergences within the evolutionary process, there is a continuity and fundamental likeness in all the levels of existence, that renders them amenable to scientific treatment, and this, together with the interactions of the different levels with each other, warrants the inclusion of them all within nature. The integrative character of mind is seen, not as an alien in the world of nature, but as an extension of a coordinating process that pervades all the levels of existence.

There is a very real sense in which both free action or choice, and ideals, which are fundamental to spiritual life, may be viewed naturalistically. Choice occurs when, after conflicting alternatives are presented, an organization of perspectives takes place which presents a course that furnishes sufficient stimulus to call forth overt action. It should be said, however, that the freedom of man with which pragmatic naturalism is chiefly concerned, is not a theory to be defended, but a goal to be gained. Our ideals also have meaning as a part of nature. They are born out of a sense of the incompleteness of our present attainments,

and are projections to fuller dimensions of what in meager degree has already been attained or observed.

The notion of worthiness does not require a dualistic view of the world. The worthiness of an act in a naturalistic view is to be determined by a consideration of foreseen consequences. One of the unfortunate facts about the idea of spiritual life is that it has been conceived apart from the results of behavior, and particularly aside from any effects upon other people. The separation of spirituality from social ends is not due to any necessary connotation of the term, but has been largely due to the fact that the human spirit has been envisaged apart from the social environment out of which it arose, and to which it must look for expression and expansion.

The Superiority of a Naturalistic Approach to Spiritual Life

The definite advantages of regarding spiritual life as a part of nature may be summarized in a few crucial points. There are, first, advantages in the extension of scientific method. The attempt to understand in terms of observable events and forces has given us more reliable knowledge than its alternatives. Scientific method has been used with fruitfulness in matters of ever-increasing complexity, and this gives confidence in the advisability and urgency of its extension to include all the aspects of human life. The faith of scientific method, based upon an abundance of evidence, is that the world is intrinsically responsive to the efforts of intelligence. More concretely, there is evidence that we know mind in essentially the same way that we know other objects. It is hard to see how there could be a mind outside the reach of scientific method unless that mind be regarded as outside of

experience.

If the spiritual world is outside of experience, or in the realm of the unknowable, then it can have no significance for us even if it does exist. A conception of spiritual life which takes refuge in the unknown as the abode of the spirit, must recede more and more as science advances. If it is defined in an obscure manner, it may escape refutation, but will have little relevance for living issues. Naturalism, on the other hand, links spirituality with the events and forces of existence. If spiritual life is anything definite and vital, it can be grasped by scientific method. Emphasis upon the vast unknown can neither be a support of spiritual reality nor a valid means of arriving at its nature.

Propositions concerning spirituality need to be formulated so that it will be reasonably possible to know whether they are true or false, and the concept of spiritual life must be so framed that it will be possible to recognize that to which it refers. Naturalism is superior to a dualism which asserts a realm beyond the empirically verifiable because the latter is unable to correct its own errors, except in so far as they arise out of logical inconsistency. It is far better to face the world of experience with categories that admit of verification than to make impossible attempts to transcend the knowable. There is no sufficient reason for the assumption of a realm that does not lend itself to scientific analysis, and there are serious objections to such an assumption, for all our progress has been made on the basis of the knowableness of existence.

The realm of human self-determination is cited by dualists as outside the realm of natural activity. A degree of indeterminism is asserted, and claimed to be advantageous in discerning the true significance of spiritual living. There is definite objection to

this view. We make dependable progress to the extent that we understand the structure of events, and we understand events to the degree in which they are seen in determinate relations. If there is a freedom that is indeterminate, we are hindered rather than helped by that fact. There is also no sufficient evidence for this indeterminism.

Dualism creates its own problems when it sets up the idea of spirit as the sole ultimate reality. By guaranteeing the world to be better, more powerful for good than it actually is found to be, riddles arise which need to be puzzled out or explained. To start out by assuming that evil is merely a lack of good, and that the totality of ultimate reality is good, is to encourage skepticism and befuddlement and a dodging of facts. It appears to be an attempt to manufacture assured optimistic conviction by means of a presupposition. The naturalist may be optimistic concerning the future of values, but his optimism arises, not from any such presupposition, but in the possibilities which he foresees in the world that he experiences. Moreover, apart from the events and forces of natural existence, together with their potentialities, we have no reason to think that there are any values. We have no evidence of the existence of values independent of the world with which science deals.

Finally dualism is in danger of minimizing the actualities of daily life. In concentrating upon values of the inner life, whose roots are claimed by dualists to be in a realm other than that of natural existence, there is fostered a neglect of the effort to cope with events and forces. The importance of health and wealth and the other conditions which modify goods that are actually experienced, is depreciated. Dualism ignores or belittles the fact that character, conduct, and consequences are inseparably

bound together, and a slighting of this truth makes for a "blind-folded morality." Moral judgment which is detached from a consideration of consequences seems "an unbecoming intrusion," and hazards value upon a realm whose very existence is problematical. It does violence to common sense evaluations of good and evil without sufficient reason.

Spiritual Idealism and Its Functions

Spirituality has too often been regarded as the cultivation of an inner peace that is oblivious to the troublous times in which it lives. The consciences of its devotees are quieted upon the evils of the world because their meditations are not grounded in reality. Sometimes, interest in an imaginary world arises as a compensation for frustration of interests in the real world. Ideals which are flights from reality are beneficial only if we do not hold them too long. They are needed from time to time to enable us to recover our sanity when the world seems to overwhelm us. After a space, man must leave this enchanted island that he may retain his capacity for grappling with things as they are.

If our ideals are to find fulfillment they must reckon with the world in which they seek realization. If, out of the dreams for a better future are to come beneficial realities, these dreams must be framed in terms of the manipulation of present actualities. An ideal whose impossible realization is emphasized brings discouragement rather than inspiration, for it reminds us that no matter what we attain, we have fallen short of the ideal.

Ideals that face reality are of two sorts: those we aim to reach, and those we seek to approximate. The latter may never be completely attained, but may help us to keep our sense of direction definitely conceptualized. A guiding star does not lose its value

as a guide because it is never reached. The creation of ideal constructs is a valuable aid in the realm of human purpose as well as in dealing with physico-chemical and biological phenomena. The spiritual man at his best does not fear a venturing hope. Through the utopias of his imagination he derives a dynamic for his strivings even in the midst of seeming defeat. Much of the evil of the world is the result of seeking ends which are too limited. The quest of larger ends is of the essence of spirituality.

Spiritual life at its fullest contains ideals that take generations to realize. Noble souls of all ages have attained only a part of that to which they have aspired. Their visions were too great to find fulfillment within their own lifetime; some of their ideas have since been embodied in existence in whole or in part. Other persons have lived for ideals that have proved to be impracticable, but their idealism with all its blunders, has helped to keep alive the aspiring life of man.

One of the chief functions of spiritual life is to give man a loyalty and a vision. Not infrequently it is enthusiasm for a cause, aspiration towards a goal which lifts us above the petty cares of life, and gives dignity to living. The dreariness of common toil is transcended in a measure, because of the larger vistas that are ours. Anxiety and vexation are sloughed off, and we are borne up on wings as eagles. With a renewed sense of the worthwhileness of life, the small tasks are undertaken with greater heart and courage. Even the matters of daily routine are seen in the setting of a large aim. Smaller goals are seen as stepping-stones toward a more distant and more inclusive ideal.

Viewed in this way, spiritual life is closely akin to religion. Religion is the endeavor to gain peace of mind, and includes a sense of dependence on the forces, personal and

impersonal, which sustain the human spirit. It endeavors to enable us to see life as worth the while. Some religions are much more spiritual than others. Spiritual religion has vision. It finds in the heritage of the past that which it may adore and admire and follow, but the past ceases to be a dead hand, and becomes an incentive to the building of nobler human lives for the future. There is a quest of far-reaching purposes and worthy ideals.

The most fruitful idealism will hold its plans of action as subject to correction, as tentative. We must cherish our ideals as stepping-stones in the search for whatever the evidence manifests to be truly best. The highest spirituality not only formulates the best programs of which it is capable, but also recognizes that its plans may be fallible. Where this realization abides, particular projects may crumble, but the spiritual man is not undone, for he has a larger commitment. He is impelled to consecrate his energies to the greatest good, which he can only dimly discern, and his mind is open to the widening of horizons through insights into the unknown and unexplored possibilities of good.

Spiritual Life and the Supreme Good

Spiritual life at its best is linked with an ethics that is humanitarian, rather than ascetic or libertine. The life that seeks to envisage a lofty end, must not be cramped or shunted aside by the notion that self-denial in itself is a good. Libertinism is unsound, on the other hand, because, in its advocacy of a jelly-fish existence, it leaves no room for discipline of one's energies, which is needed for the effective self-direction that makes for the fullest life in the long run. The delights of an hour may be detrimental to the attainment of a distant goal.

The spiritual man who is wise and humane does not despise

his impulses, but he is not in bondage to them. He is no slave to caprice, for he is governed by a large perspective. Fosdick has well said that all the deepest experiences in life are two-sided: they are composed of responsiveness, but also of responsibility. Spiritual life requires expression as well as impression. A humanitarian life, with a broad perspective in time and space, is an effective instrument in the alleviation of human maladies, and an ally of man in his age-long pursuit for abundant living.

The main criteria of a noble spiritual life may be stated succinctly. Such a spirituality seeks to enrich life by a cultivation of sensitiveness to the beautiful, a responsiveness to the manifold qualitative glory of aesthetic objects. It endeavors to augment value also by a study of physical and social conditions that make for the increase of good. To think of more and more meanings for an event may be a source of increase of good. Even the giving of a cup of cold water may not be devoid of meaning. To contemplate any happening in its many connections and benefits, may call up memories and inspire hopes.

The highest spirituality, however, requires more than this. There must be a manipulation of existence towards an understanding and far-reaching good. The greatest good may involve not merely the harmonizing of desires, but the transformation of these desires, and an altering of the social structure. It is when we enlarge our horizons beyond the immediate, and are willing to sacrifice a more satisfying experience in the present for a greater good in the future that spiritual living emerges. When spiritual life is most adequate this principle of action operates not only for the individual's own good, but for the greatest good of all humanity, both now and in future generations. It is then that spiritual life becomes a bridge between human desire and the supreme good.

In human relations, a spiritual life that seeks the highest good, means an endeavor for mutual understanding, criticism and appreciation of each other, cooperation, and common devotions. With the vast amount of specialization today, there is need for bringing integration and unity to communities and peoples. A community of endeavor which embraces generations of men lends a grandeur to the efforts of individuals who cross the stage and play their roles in the drama of life. The joys of the moment are enhanced by the sense of a great enterprise; and this perspective gives courage and hope in that long and often arduous way that leads to the life abundant. If this spiritual faith is ours, we may view the work of our hands as promoting the shaping of an order that is yet to be, as helping to carve out in the future the utopia of our dreams.

